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WHAT FORM OF INDUSTRIAL TRAINING IS MOST PRACTICAL AND BEST SUITED TO THE COUNTRY CHILD?¹

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It is to be regretted, perhaps, that we do not have a better term to express the thought of this afternoon's programme; for a great many most excellent people today moving along Educational Avenue, leading up to the public school, shy and stop still at the sight of the word "industrial" as applied to the work of the school. Any attempt to lead them closer for a more careful inspection of this word proves unavailing. To their thinking, industrial training means the elimination of "culture," whatever that may mean, and the substitution of the reform school or the trade school. For them the thought has not yet come that education should be for service as well as for "sweetness and light"; that the children in our schools should be able to do things, as well as to know about things. And in the doing of things there is as great opportunity for culture as there is in studying about what men have said and done, as revealed by the printed page.

The distinction between higher education and industrial education has no real foundation upon which to rest. It is a survival of the aristocratic ideas of the Middle Ages. The thought is not original with the writer to claim that farming and blacksmithing are just as high as law and theology. Whether it be better to be a blacksmith than a minister depends. As has been well said recently: "It is better to pound an anvil and make a good horseshoe than to pound a pulpit and make a poor sermon."

Quoting further from this same writer: "There is a real distinction between education for self-support and education for self-development; between what the Germans call the bread-and-

¹ Paper read before the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, Louisville, Ky., March 1, 1906.

butter sciences and culture. In order, if not in importance, the bread-and-butter sciences come first. The first duty every man owes to society is to support himself; therefore, the first office of education is to enable the pupil to support himself." And, as has been said above, industrial education, if carried on aright, contributes to self-culture as well as to self-support. . . .

My discussion calls for a consideration of "What Form of Industrial Training Is Most Practical and Best Suited for the Country Child?"

All those interests and activities that relate to agriculture in an elementary way, quite elementary for a while, are practical and suited for the training of the country child. The prosperity of this nation in its last analysis rests upon agriculture. A very great majority of the children enrolled in the country schools will remain on the farm, and the country school should help them to a better understanding of the new phases of agriculture. The number remaining on the farm will increase when right ideals prevail in the instruction with reference to the dignity, worth, and financial possibilities of the kind of farming that is "higher education."

To be specific, a study of the soil by means of the school garden is practical to a certain extent in every country school. To be sure, a live teacher will get more out of it than a dead one who does not yet even know that she is dead. But something is done and can be done. A start is being made. To wait till all the teaching force is ready is to do nothing.

Last year the Department of Agriculture at Washington surveyed over fifteen million acres of farm land. The state of Illinois is spending \$25,000 annually in its soil survey and soil experiments. Thus far, sixteen counties have been surveyed, and the expectation is to continue till the entire 102 counties are surveyed. Every type of soil, as small as ten-acre lots, is mapped and described. A various-colored map is published and put in bulletin form.

Here is a map of one county [showing] which gives you an idea of the work of the Soil Bureau. You see the different types of soil for this particular county represented by different

colors. The printed matter in connection with this map gives an accurate account of the early settlement, climate, physiography and geology, description of the types of soil, agricultural conditions, markets, transportation facilities, etc. Laying aside all thought of industrial training and the so-called elimination of "culture," and the alleged "making farmers" of our country children by "putting agriculture into the country school," just think how valuable this bulletin is in teaching home geography! Surely there is time for the study of geography in the average country school. A copy of this map and bulletin was put into the library of every country school of this county. The expense was nothing. And this map, so far as it goes, is far more valuable for the teaching of agriculture than the so-called agricultural charts for \$40 which some school officers are buying of agents who are posing as apostles of agricultural instruction for the country school.

We are not quite accurate when we speak of "putting agriculture into the country school." Rather let us attempt to put the school into agriculture, into right relation to its environment.

A school garden is practical. True, it is in its experimental stage as yet. So was manual training for the city child, and is so to a certain extent today. But no one would eliminate manual training because teachers do not yet know all about matter and method. We do not know all about the school garden as a means of giving instruction with reference to soil and plant-life. We can learn, however, and learn by doing, even if the doing is crude for a few years. The best way to have a garden in the country school is to have it even if it is no larger than four feet square. A start can be made, and that is a great deal. To sit down and contemplate the difficulties is to remain seated.

School-garden work, manual training, and domestic arts for the country school will be put on a more intelligent and permanent basis when there are trained supervisors for this work, just as many city schools now have. This will come when the county superintendent can change the ideals of the country people so that they will regard the office for educational leadership, and not subject to the exigencies of party politics. The task of changing ideals in this respect is a fairly big one.

True, if we could have such gardens as the Macdonald gardens of Canada, better results would be obtained. If millions of this country would find it possible to do as this man is doing, doing something for the country child, a great educational uplift would come to all phases of country life. Here [showing] is a most interesting pamphlet describing the Macdonald gardens. There are special traveling instructors for these gardens, which are two acres in extent. One or two quotations are sufficient to reveal their character.

With reference to the place of the garden in school work :

The work of the garden is recognized as a legitimate part of the school program, and is already interwoven with a considerable part of the other studies. The garden is becoming the outer classroom of the school, and its plots are its blackboards. The garden is not an innovation, or an excrescence, or an addendum, or a diversion. It is a happy field of expression, an organic part of the school in which boys and girls work among growing things and grow themselves in body and mind and spiritual outlook.

Of the advantages, the following summary only is given here :

1. Educationally, it affords a release from the dull routine of the schoolroom, and puts the pupil out into the fresh air and sunlight. It is a means of help by affording scope for motor activities that are natural to growing children. The garden work is correlated with much of the formal work of the school, as arithmetic, reading, composition, drawing, etc. It serves as an introduction to the development of literary appreciation, as the "ability to appreciate the charm of many of the best poems depends not a little on ability to form visual images of natural objects." In this respect, if the teacher in the country school is alert, the country child has the advantage over the city child; for "the urban eye of the town-bred child, who has never been interested in garden or field, must fail to catch the imagery of our best nature poems."

2. Economically, the school garden teaches the composition and care of the soil, best conditions for plant life, value of fertilizers, seed selection, etc.

3. Nationally, the school garden develops an interest in the fundamental industry of the country. There develops the sense of ownership and of respect for property.

In the care of their own plots the pupils fight common enemies and learn that a bad weed in a neglected plot may make trouble for many others. The garden is a pleasant avenue of communication between the school and the home, relating them in a new and living way, and thereby strengthening the public interest in the school as a national institution.

A study of plant-life is practical and suited for the country child. For years we have had the thoroughbred horse, the pure-bred cow, and now comes the high-bred corn. Here is an ear [showing] of high-bred corn raised by the president of the Illinois Corn Growers' Association. This was taken from a field that easily made one hundred bushels per acre. To be sure, to raise hundred-bushel corn there must be not only hundred-bushel seed, but also hundred-bushel soil and a hundred-bushel man. Our industrial training should teach the children in the country schools to strive for these three things: better seed, increasingly fertile soil, and more intelligent methods of operation. Here is an opportunity for the school to co-operate with the home and train children to study corn on experimental plots at home.

Likewise some training with reference to farm animal-life, and a consideration of some of the elementary principles of the business and of farming, is practical and suitable. Farm economics is practical arithmetic, and could well take the place of much textbook matter that is "taught at." Surely the average country school has time to teach the arithmetic that the pupils must use after leaving school.

With the country high schools—that is, the village high schools—and the country consolidated school as centers, manual training for the country child should begin. From these schools this educational activity will spread into a large number of one-room country schools. This will be slow; for the average farmer does not yet distinguish between manual training and manual labor. If all the data could be collected, it would appear that quite a considerable amount of manual training, elementary in form, is now being carried on in the country schools.

Here is a great opportunity for the school to co-operate with the country home; and through the inspiration and help of a live teacher a work-bench can be installed in the home workshop,

if it seems impracticable to instal one in the country schoolhouse. The boy at home—and the girl, too, in connection with home economy—can make a small collection of simple tools, and from the teacher receive instruction as to processes of work, etc. The country school and the country home should come closer together. The lines of industrial work suited to the farm and farm home offer an exceptionally fine opportunity for this closer union for a common purpose. Most of the old farm activities have gone since the introduction of farm machinery of improved make. With this change have gone some elements in the training for the country child that must be supplied by the new country school and the new farm home, to meet the new conditions of country life in the age of telephones, trolley cars, daily delivery of mail, improved farm machinery, discoveries relating to the science of agriculture, and improved methods of farm operations.

For the boy this manual training will consist in a working knowledge of the care and use of tools for repair work on the farm, farm mechanics, the simple elements of carpentry, etc. Along with this will go a practical knowledge of materials.

For the girl there will be instruction in household economy and management, food materials and the preparation of food, sewing and a study of textiles, etc.

There need be no alarm that the country child will not receive culture along these lines. As has been well said :

To teach a boy the mechanics of home-keeping, to teach the girl the chemistry of home-keeping, is as much self-culture as to teach either what kinds of homes the ancient Greeks and Romans possessed. Our present self-development is too narrow. We need to broaden it. Manual training is necessary to make the "all-round" man.

We can take this culture to the country child, and in addition take to the country school good books, art, and music; and we need no longer be under the necessity of tearing up the farm home by its roots and taking the children to the city to secure the country child's rights, so far as an educational opportunity is concerned, to partake of all that is best the age has to offer.